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## BOOK REVIEWS

LANDSCAPE PAINTING, BY BIRGE HARRISON. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1909. Price \$1.50.

A promise to put into permanent form certain impromptu talks on landscape painting, given by Mr. Harrison before the Art Students' League of New York, at its summer school at Woodstock, is the *raison d'être* of this delightful little volume. With all the freshness and force of the spoken word the author treats of such subjects as color, vibration, refraction, values, composition, and quality, and gives them significance to the layman as well as new meaning to the student. These essays are, as the author himself has put it, "straight from the shoulder," and in each instance they hit the mark. Not only does Mr. Harrison present old truths in new habiliments, but proclaims new ones derived from an individualistic, personal standpoint. In the chapter on color the writer makes the somewhat startling statement that we are all born color blind and then proceeds to prove it, resorting to physical tests. Whether or not one sees color depends, it seems, upon how many cones one has in one's eye, which inevitably goes to show that any attempt to cultivate the color sense is futile. Color and music, Mr. Harrison declares to be closely allied, both in their highest expression coming nearer to the perfect ideal of beauty as felt and understood by humanity than any other form of art, because they "stimulate the imagination and suggest more than they express." To this quality he attributes the poignant and irresistible charm of a Venetian sunset by Gedney Bunce, and a Spring Morning by Corot. Not finding a word exactly expressing both the cause and effect of "lost edge," Mr. Harrison, as he frankly admits, resorted to piracy and pressed "refraction" into service, "twisting it far from its original meaning," but with faith that in time it would come to carry gracefully the full burden of definition. In this connection he relates an illuminating anecdote of a man who thought he could see at once all the

leaves on a tree until a piece of paper was pinned on a bough upon which to focus his attention when he made the startling discovery that he could count less than fifty, all of which is purposed to show that the business of the painter is to transmit emotions and impressions of strength and power direct from nature, but not as through the lens of a camera—a thing which is little understood.

In the chapter on drawing the writer says, "In art, as in other affairs of life, those go faster and farthest who follow the line of least resistance," but straightway removes the student's hope of an easy journey by further remarking that drawing, like grammar, is not a virtue to be extolled but an essential to be demanded. Again, introducing the chapter on composition, Mr. Harrison queries why, when there are so many good compositions in the world, any one should ever waste time on a bad one, asserting that the one and only inviolable law in this respect is "don't try to put two pictures on one canvas." Touching upon native art, Mr. Harrison refers to a letter recently published by the Free Art League, congratulating the American people upon the revision of the tariff and suggesting that the resultant influx of treasures will raise the standard of American manufactures, serving as models for our artisans. "We may indeed rejoice," he says, "if at last we are to come into our heritage—but if our only use for the treasures of the old world is to copy them it were better they should remain across the water. It is certain, I think, that America will one day have a school of decorative art that will win the universal admiration of the world, but if this is ever to happen it will be because she has developed an art that is wholly her own, an art that is purely American; an art whose symbols will be the American flora and fauna as seen by American eyes and felt through the American temperament. There is only one path by which an individual or a nation can hope to attain eminence in art, or even in the arts and crafts, and that path always leads direct to nature."

These are but fragments chosen almost at random, as the pages which have been

read by the reviewer with keenest interest are scanned. From first to last the note of personality is strongly felt and in itself lends to the work memorable quality. It is not too much to say that this book is no less enjoyable than it is informing, or *vice versa*.

**THE HIGHER LIFE IN ART.** BY JOHN LA FARGE. Doubleday, Page & Company, New York. Price \$2.50.

A series of lectures on the Barbizon School of France, delivered by Mr. La Farge at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1903, inaugurating the Scammon Course, the publication of which, though delayed by "unforeseen circumstances," is none the less welcome. Mr. La Farge is one who speaks with authority, having rendered distinguished service in the field of art, so his utterances invariably command respectful attention and possess special significance. In the first of these lectures Mr. La Farge explains his reason for having selected the Barbizon School as his theme.

"It seemed to me," he says, "that a form of discourse which should refer to the works of men who must have had the same problem before them and met it in a special way, might be a manner of explaining one's own experience by using it to look at the experience of others. In this particular case, if I wrote and spoke about artists who had lived within my own time, of whom I absolutely knew, whose life was part of my own, these real stories would be like the talk of the older professional man to the younger about what the men of his day were like, what happened to them, and the lessons of that reminiscence would come of themselves." The artists of whom Mr. La Farge speaks or writes are Chassériau, Delacroix, Fantin-Latour, Gérault, Millet, Decamps, Diaz, Rousseau, Dupré, Daubigny and lastly Corot. A good deal of biographical matter finds its way in each chapter, but only such as may be said to have had direct bearing upon the art of the painter under consideration. For it is, one might almost say, the impersonal

side which Mr. La Farge has emphasized—the contribution made by these several painters to the art of the world which has made them "necessarily a part" of those who follow after, whether it be along precisely the same high road or no, provided it be with aspiration. The text is accompanied by numerous excellent full-page illustrations, reproductions of the several artists' most characteristic works.

**ONE HUNDRED COUNTRY HOUSES,** BY AYMAR EMBURY II. The Century Company, New York, 1909. Price \$3.00.

This volume contains reproductions and descriptions of one hundred country homes, which, while varying in type, collectively set forth a style of architecture which has been declared purely American. The characteristic of this style the writer, who is himself a practising architect, finds to be honest expression of the plan and structure in the exterior, and great freedom and care in the use of materials, with an effort constantly to expose rather than conceal their nature.

In order to emphasize individual features Mr. Embury has classed the dwelling houses he has described, which by the way are for the most part comparatively costly, under the following headings: New England Colonial, Southern Colonial, Classical Revival, Dutch Colonial, Spanish or Mission, American Farm House, Elizabethan, Modern English, Italian, Art Nouveau, and Japanesque, devoting to each a chapter and using as illustrations the works of well-known architects. The writer traces the improvement in domestic architecture to the Art Nouveau movement, which he asserts vitalized archæology into architecture. Without resorting to technicality, Mr. Embury has made patent those things which go to differentiate good from bad architectural design, laying strong emphasis upon the value of fitness—the element of common sense. The illustrations are good and of special value on account of showing, in most instances, not only the houses but their setting.